

# NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Goochland County Courthouse

Other Name/Site Number:

## 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 2938 River Road West  
Goochland County Court Square  
[E side of Rte. 6 (Rte. 522)]

City/Town: Goochland Court House

Vicinity:

State: VA County: Goochland Code: 075

Zip Code: 23063

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

### Ownership of Property

Private: ☐

Public-Local: ☐

Public-State: ☒

Public-Federal: ☐

### Category of Property

Building(s): ☒

District: ☐

Site: ☐

Structure: ☐

Object: ☐

### Number of Resources within Property

#### Contributing

5

  

1

1

7

#### Noncontributing

   buildings

   sites

   structures

1 objects

1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 5

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

Jeffersonian Courthouse NHL Thematic Nomination Project

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this   X   nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property   X   meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria.

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Signature of Certifying Official

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Date

---

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property   X   meets        does not meet the National Register criteria.

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Signature of Commenting or Other Official

---

Date

---

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register  
       Determined eligible for the National Register  
       Determined not eligible for the National Register  
       Removed from the National Register  
       Other (explain):

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Signature of Keeper

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Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: Government: Courthouse

Sub:

Current: Government: Courthouse

Sub:

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: Early Republic: Early Classical Revival

Materials: Brick, wood, stone

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Brick

Roof: Slate

Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

**Summary**

Externally the third Goochland County Courthouse (1826-27) preserves the elements of Jefferson's reform in a remarkable state of completeness. Internally, despite many alterations, the essentials of Jefferson's scheme have held their place.

**Resources**

There are eight resources on the Courthouse Square. Six of these resources were previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places; five were buildings, one an object. Two resources were not previously listed, one contributing building and one non-contributing object.

The previously listed resources include four contributing buildings: 1) the ca. 1826-27 Courthouse, 2) the old clerk's office dating to 1847, 3) the jail dated to various parts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and 4) a previously listed structure, the brick wall enclosing the square erected in 1848. The fifth previously listed object is a Confederate monument, erected in 1918.

The resources not previously listed are 1) a contributing building, the Knibb Building, also called the 1906 House, 2) a contributing building, a brick outbuilding, now used as a storehouse, dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup>- or early 20<sup>th</sup>-century and 3) a non-contributing object, a Vietnam veterans memorial erected during the 1990s.

**Exterior**

The Goochland County Courthouse takes up the Jeffersonian theme of the two-story, temple-shaped courthouse of red brick with white-painted trim, with a freestanding four-column or tetrastyle portico in the Tuscan Order on the west or entry front. The columns consist of freestone bases, heavily crusted stuccoed brick shafts, and freestone capitals. The columns support a wooden entablature that runs around the sides of the courthouse and carries a wooden pediment and a gabled slate roof, apparently the slate roof that replaced or was laid on top of the original sheet metal surface in 1847. At the portico, the herringbone brick floor rises less than 6" above the current ground level; the ceiling occupies approximately the level of the cornice, leaving most of the inner faces of the entablature visible as a deep beam. The Order is an adaptation of the Tuscan of Andrea Palladio, and the curving taper or entasis of the shafts probably even obeys Palladio's principle that the curve should begin one third of the way up the shaft. Partly for economy, the Courthouse builders altered Palladio's Tuscan in line with derivatives

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of Palladio's Order that the American patternbook writer Asher Benjamin and the British patternbook writer James Gibbs had published in builder's guides. The oblong body of the Goochland County Courthouse consists of brick walls which betray no trace of the cornerstone laid on 23 September 1826.<sup>1</sup> The brickwork, of Flemish bond on the three-bay front, grades into a variation on Liverpool or three-course American bond along the three-bay sides. Abundant traces of white-painted mortar joints survive. The front has regularly spaced apertures, a central door in two six-paneled leaves and six-over-six sash with louvered shutters, diminishing in size on the second floor, all with broadly chiseled freestone sills. A sympathetic pair of wooden benches, made by the Farmville Manufacturing Company for the courtroom in the early 1930s, stands beside the central door. Of later twentieth-century make, twin glass-doored bulletin boards that are accessible to all hang at the sides of the entry. A sprinkling of nail holes and nails, mainly beside the doorway, tells of how notices were posted before the boards came. A bell, not mentioned in the specifications of 1825/1826 hangs from the bottom of the entablature in the central intercolumniation of the portico and is rung by a cord wrapped around a bent nail driven into the main doorcase. The first bay of the irregularly membered north and south walls holds a side door in two four-panel leaves under a transom with modern concrete sills. The flank windows match those of the main front. Adjacent to each side door, the brickwork continues above the entablature as a pedestal-form stretcher-bond or American bond chimney built to serve two fireplaces in the courtroom and one fireplace in each of the two the original jury rooms. (The specifications call for a pair of matching false chimneys at the Bench end of the building, but these were probably not executed and are not present now.) The segmentally curved apse at the rear or east of the courthouse, executed in the same Liverpool bond as the flanks, is imbedded in an addition designed in 1989 by Wood, Sweet, and Swofford to hold new judge's chambers, witness rooms, and other facilities. This annex, which replaced one made by Courtney S. Welton & Sons in 1955 to hold judge's chambers and other accommodations, incorporates on the northeast a nineteenth-century brick law office that stood outside the original east boundary of the courthouse square. On the south, via a Jeffersonian brick arcade, the east annex joins a 1966 annex, also of brick. On the north, a similar set of arcades connects to a brick annex of 1979-80 that accommodates the General District Court, the Clerk of Circuit Court, and other functions.

**Interior**

The interior of the Goochland County Courthouse has been modified, but this is a functioning twenty-first-century courtroom that embodies the essentials of the Jeffersonian plan: a hall of justice dominated by the bar and the bench in its apse at one end, with an entry under jury rooms on a gallery at the other end. The main or west entry at Goochland opens to the interior via a vestibule that, along with the courtroom benches, was made by the Farmville Manufacturing Company. These features, like the slab concrete floor under the 1990s carpeting and raised bar floor, date to a renovation of 1932-34. The west end preserves most of its original gallery, resting on two wooden columns that rise from rudimentary freestone plinths. The Order, with entasis, dentils, and no molded base, is a reinterpretation of the Doric Order of the Theater of Marcellus in Rome, the Order that Jefferson had selected for Pavilion X at the University of Virginia from the *Parallèle de l'architecture* of the French Palladian Fréart de Chambray. The Goochland gallery is reached by its two original staircases which run up each side wall, the original balusters giving way at the top of the steps to a twentieth-century Jeffersonian Chinese rail. The gallery holds two rooms, a larger jury room on the north, and its smaller mate on the south. Now used for storage, one of the traditional roles of such rooms, the two spaces retain their original door frames, window frames, and brick hearths but have lost their chimneypieces. Below, in the body of the hall, the fittings and furnishings are all twentieth-century except for some window- and doorframes. Opposite the gallery stands the bar and beyond that the bench, raised onto wooden platforms by Wood, Sweet, and Swofford, who renovated the interior as well as adding the east annex. The bench still occupies its shallow apse, one of the few such niches to survive in a Virginia courthouse. The remodeling in the early 1990s created a pair of false windows in the apse to approximate the original pair, so that two "windows" flank the judge's chair in the eighteenth-century Virginia tradition that Jefferson had reinforced.

The square includes a full set of the classic features that survive at one Virginia rural courthouse complex after another: the old clerk's office, in this case of brick (1847); a jail, here of granite or gneiss with chimney flues borne on a barrel vault in Jeffersonian fashion (date uncertain); and a Confederate

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monument, in this instance of granite (dedicated in 1918). As usual, the pillory, whipping post, stock, and outdoor gallows have vanished, although the jail stairhall, an indoor space used for hanging, survives. A brick wall (erected in 1840; modified in 1958) embraces three sides of the square in front of the courthouse. In the environs one notices as a lack only the absence of the former taverns that accommodated visitors on Court Day. In addition to the traditional features of a courthouse square there are contributing structures: the James Clopton Knibb Building, also called the 1906 House, a brick office building; an undated brick outbuilding now a storehouse, behind the Knibb Building; and, just north of the courthouse, in a living continuation of the principle behind the Confederate monument, a granite veterans' memorial made by the L. E. Simmons Monument Company of Crewe, Virginia, and dedicated by American Legion Post 215 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8617 in 1998.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: \_\_ Locally: \_\_

Applicable National

Register Criteria:

A\_\_ B\_\_ C X D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions):

A\_\_ B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G

NHL Criteria:

Criterion 4

NHL Theme(s): Shaping the Political Landscape

Areas of Significance: Political

Period(s) of Significance: 1826-1954

Significant Dates: 1826-27

Significant Person(s): Thomas Jefferson

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Dabney Cosby and Valentine Parrish

Historic Contexts:

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

### Summary

The third Goochland County Courthouse is one of the high achievements of the Jeffersonian reform of Virginia civic architecture. This shrine of the law fuses the traditional plan, the masonry, the temple form, and the monumental Order in a memorably coherent fashion. Moreover, the Goochland building reflects at least two of Jefferson's most effective techniques, the setting of models and the retraining of workmen. At the same time, the Tuscan Order and the bell illustrate two basic limitations of Jefferson's reform. The traits in question survive in a building that has suffered remarkably little alteration.

### Statement of Significance

The design of the Goochland's third courthouse, which won out over at least one if not two rivals, exemplifies Jefferson's generic principles for the reshaping of Virginia architecture. The essence of the courthouse is Cosby and Parrish's edifice does indeed display the dignity of the Orders in their grandest arrangement, a temple portico, that is, a set of columns carrying a beam or entablature that in turn supports a gable or pediment. As opposed to the second failing, Cosby and Parrish's walls are of finely laid brick, the column bases and capitals are dressed stone, and, in a technique that Jefferson expressly imitated from the practice of Andrea Palladio, the shafts are stuccoed brick. Jefferson himself went no further in the pursuit of durable construction. The I-plan building (finished 1763) that this courthouse is almost undocumented, but it is unlikely to have possessed great dignity and it was almost certainly of wood.

As to the specifics of Jefferson's campaign, Goochland abundantly exemplifies how Jefferson molded taste by setting models. The first of these models was Jefferson's own courthouse design, K214-215, although it may apply only indirectly. The essence of Jefferson's conception, the established Virginia courtroom plan with an apse and gallery inserted inside a tetrastyle prostyle temple, defined the Goochland design. Cosby and Parrish deviated only in non-essential particulars, such as designing a curved apse without an arcade rather than Jefferson's polygonal apse within an arcade. Nonetheless, the impact of Jefferson's model may have been only indirect. The slender documentation on Goochland's Tuscan temple does not embrace any direct contact with the Master of Monticello.

With the Buckingham County Courthouse, ties may be more numerous. As cited in the 1825/1826 Goochland specifications, the Buckingham County Courthouse was an undeniable model, at least for an unnamed handling of the jury rooms, and probably for much more. Delos D. Hughes has tentatively proposed that Dabney Cosby was the contractor or "undertaker" for the Buckingham courthouse, with Valentine Parrish as one of the subcontractors for the carpentry. If this is so, then the duo who built the Goochland courthouse came to the task with fresh lessons from Jefferson's model to the southwest. Those lessons may well have included the Jeffersonian wings that the Buckinghamites had added to Jefferson's design, for in 1826 the Goochlanders considered adding a pair of offices to their courthouse.

Another set of Jefferson paradigms enters in at Goochland, where the portico floor rises less than 6" above ground level. In this respect, Cosby and Parrish went much beyond Jefferson in lowering the entry level. The inescapable prototypes for their treatment are the temple-form Pavilions along the University of Virginia Lawn. The Lawn further gave the impetus for using the Theater of Marcellus Order under the gallery.

As to instructing workmen, it scarcely needs to be stated again that Jefferson apparently retrained Cosby. In turn, Cosby may have left a mark on Parrish, who is not documented as a University of Virginia tradesman. The Goochland walls are of finely laid brick, the column bases and capitals are dressed stone, and, in a technique that Jefferson expressly imitated from Palladio, the shafts are stuccoed brick. Jefferson himself went no further in the pursuit of durable construction – all this in contrast to the predecessor building (finished 1763), which is almost undocumented but was almost certainly of wood.

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Not for Goochland portico, however, was the purist's Fréart-Palladio Tuscan of the Lawn, with the deeply hollowed soffit of its cornice. James Gibbs had made the Fréart-Palladio Tuscan cornice more economical by replacing the sculpted underside or soffit of the cornice – one of the beauties of this Order – with a flat surface. It is probably Gibbs's influence on American builders that accounts for just such a flat soffit on the Goochland cornice. More material is the impact of subjective Adamesque proportions, very likely via the books of the premiere American popularizer of the Adamesque, Asher Benjamin and his collaborator Daniel Raynerd, who purveyed Adamesque elegance and economical savings, without regard to inherited rules of proportion. This seems to be the kind of design that Jefferson meant when he wrote of "false architecture, so much the rage at present." The Goochland Tuscan columns would measure just seven diameters in height from base through capital if they were true to Palladio's Tuscan, to the Vitruvian Tuscan proportions that Palladio followed, and to Fréart's interpretation of Palladio's Tuscan. In fact the Goochland columns measure substantially more than seven diameters. At courthouse after courthouse, the stout Jefferson-Fréart-Palladio Tuscan did not stand a chance against the svelte stylizations of the Adamesque Tuscan, and Goochland was no exception to this pattern. At Goochland, however, the attenuation of the Order was so discreet that it has hitherto escaped notice.

The second limitation on Jefferson's campaign of course concerned the courthouse bell. The Goochland bell, which is old but is not mentioned in the specifications, dangles from the middle of the colonnade, its cord wound around an improvised hook. Refusing to use cupolas as "degeneracies" within the Renaissance, Jefferson found no alternative way to integrate a bell into a temple-form design. At Jefferson's Charlotte County Courthouse of 1822-23, whether by Jefferson's design or not, the bell merely hangs from the bottom of the portico entablature, and whoever picked the placement of the Goochland bell took the same course.

It takes probing to recognize the grounds for reservations about the success of Jefferson's campaign. Even with these reservations voiced, it remains true that the Goochland County Courthouse is an arresting example of the simplicity, strength, dignity, and beauty with which Thomas Jefferson wished to imbue the most important civic buildings of his native state.



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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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## Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- \_\_\_\_ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- X  Previously Listed in the National Register: VDHR#37-136
- \_\_\_\_ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- \_\_\_\_ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- \_\_\_\_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey:
- \_\_\_\_ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:

## Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X  State Historic Preservation Office
- X  Other State Agency: The Library of Virginia

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- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other (Specify Repository): The Virginia Historical Society

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 2 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
Goochland	18	245676E	4174509 <sup>1</sup> N

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The boundary description for the is

Goochland Tax Parcel Map Reference Number 42-1-1-104.

**Boundary Justification:**

These boundaries include the land historically associated with the Goochland County Courthouse.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Charles Brownell, Professor of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University (with thanks to Dr. Robert A. Carter, Bryan Clark Green, and Calder Loth of the VDHR; Phyllis B. Silber, Executive Director, Goochland County Historical Society; Lee G. Turner, Clerk of Circuit Court, and Cecil Youngblood, Buildings and Grounds Superintendent, County of Goochland; Dr. Delos D. Hughes, Professor Emeritus, Department of Politics, Washington and Lee University; and Erika S. A. Moore, graduate student, and Craig A. Reynolds, Bess T. Brownell Assistant in Architectural History, Department of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University).

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
February 3, 2004

**Endnotes**

1. According to a note inside the front cover of Goochland County Order Book 31 (1825-31) the cornerstone, laid by the Masons, is inscribed "on one side – Dedicated to Justice + Masonry. On one other side – Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> A.L. 5826. A.D. 1826 – on one other side – D. Cosby + V. Parrish Architects -- + on the fourth side – Goochland Lodge No. 115 Fecit W. Mountjoy, Richmond."

2. For an understanding of the functions of the buildings on the Square, it is significant that, in the persistence of an old custom, in 1826 the Clerk of the County, William Miller, the first of five members of his family to serve as Clerk of the County, preserved his power to keep his office at his house, and the Miller house remained the Clerk's Office for some time; see County of

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Goochland, Order Book 31, p. 82; also Helène Barret Agee, Facets of Goochland (Virginia) County's History (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1962), 49, 172 (incorrectly identifying the Miller house as Reed Marsh). On the the pillory, whipping post, and stock see Agee 47.

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